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AMATEUR SCENE-PAINTING.

It is not often that scene-painting is attempted by amateurs, and for the best possible reason—because very few people even know what colors are used, and how they are applied. It is a common error to suppose that oil paints are employed, when in fact the colors are the ordinary ones used in different arts and manufactures, but ground up with water, and tempered, when used, with a small quantity of size.

Having fixed the dimensions of the scene to be painted, which of course must be governed by the size of the room at our disposal, we must first of all have a frame made on which to stretch our canvas. Any kind of canvas will do for scenery, provided that it is close in texture. Unbleached calico will do for temporary work, but if we wish our scenes to last we must employ canvas. The painting-frame should be strong, and should be made in the form shown at Fig. 1; for as soon as the material is wetted it shrinks, and is apt to pull the frame all out of shape unless it is properly constructed. The canvas should be neatly joined, and so placed on the frame that the seams will lie across the picture, not from top to bottom. Neglect of this precaution will most likely lead to the scene hanging in bulging folds, a fault which will spoil the best painting, and one for which there is no remedy.

The canvas being sewn, we must tack it on the frame with $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch nails. All four corners must be first secured, and afterwards the sides may be nailed down, one being completed before another is begun. By this means the canvas can be nailed on so as to present one even surface.

The material must now be prepared for the reception of the colors by an operation which is called "priming." But the canvas must first of all receive a coating of size. The best double size must be used, and should be melted in a kettle with a small quantity of water. It should be watched and occasionally stirred, and should not be allowed to boil. After this size has been well brushed into the canvas and allowed to dry the priming can be applied. This consists of whiting, which has been soaked in water until it assumes the appearance of thick white mud. To this strong size must be added until the mixture is of the consistency of cream. It should be neither too thick nor too thin, but just sufficiently limpid to flow easily from the broad whitewash brush with which it is applied to the canvas.

The frame being placed upright and properly secured, the workman commences at the top, working the priming brush up and down and then horizontally, so as to avoid leaving any lines upon the canvas, until it is all covered. Should the canvas be very rough in texture, another thinner coat of priming may be applied when the first is dry, but one is generally sufficient. Leaving our canvas to dry—an operation which will in the driest weather take about four hours—we can now collect our painting materials.

A palette is the first requisite. This should be made of board, with little recesses for the colors round three sides of it (see Fig. 2). It should, when made, receive three coats of white oil color, and be well rubbed down with glass-paper, so that it may present a smooth surface for the brush, and also to prevent the colors sinking into the wood and becoming indistinguishable.

The colors used are the following:

Flake white.	Indian red.
Yellow ochre.	Vermilion.
Chrome yellow.	Rose pink.
Orange lead.	Ultramarine.
Venetian red.	Emerald green.

The above can be bought in a dry state, as they are sufficiently soft to be readily mixed with water by the help of the palette-knife; but the following must be obtained ready ground in water in the form of a paste:

Drop black.	*Raw sienna.
Raw umber.	*Burnt sienna.
*Burnt umber.	*Vandyke brown.
*Indigo.	*Damp lake.
Green lake.	Dutch pink.

Those marked * are mostly for glazing—*i.e.*, for using with strong size for deepening and enriching

the body colors. Each color should be kept in a little pot, and just covered with water, a piece being taken out of each as required to supply the palette. The colors on the latter can be arranged according to fancy, but it is well to place the darker colors together, and the lighter ones opposite to them.

Before we begin to sketch in the design, we may at once disabuse our minds of the common idea that scene-painting is a kind of slapdash work that any one can do. On the contrary, it is perhaps the most difficult kind of painting that one can choose. People will often condemn a bad picture by saying it is "like scene-painting," whereas if it were really like good scene-painting it would be a valuable work. The

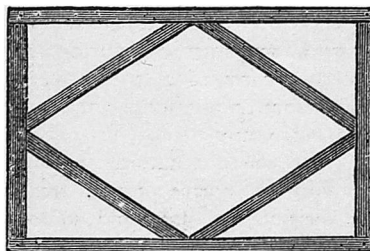


Fig. 1. SCENE FRAME.

English landscape-painter, Stanfield, was originally a scene-painter. Thackeray, alluding to Stanfield's paintings, says that "he d'd more towards advancing the taste of the English public for landscape art than any other living painter. He taught the public from the stage, taught the pit and gallery to admire landscape art and the boxes to become connoisseurs, and decorated the theatre with works so beautiful that one regrets the frail material on which they were constructed." Certainly, he who can make no headway with ordinary drawing materials need not hope to

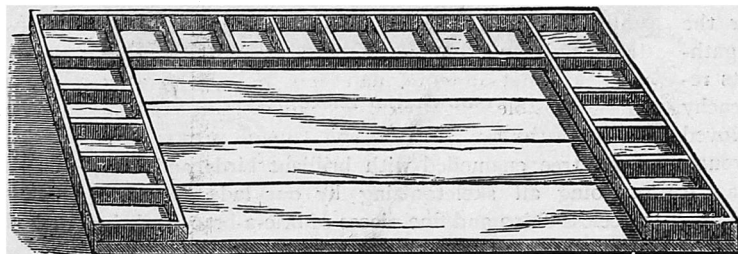


Fig. 2. SCENE-PAINTER'S PALETTE.

hide his imperfections by trying scene-painting, for, enlarged, they will be still more apparent. Any good book on water-color drawing will apply in its directions to scene-painting if we except the use of such tints as the madders, and others of a like expensive nature, which of course are quite out of the question in large work. And I need hardly say that the ordinary rules of perspective must be attended to with the most rigid accuracy.

This latter injunction will perhaps sound to some rather formidable. They may say, "We can find the horizontal line and point of sight *on paper*, and can

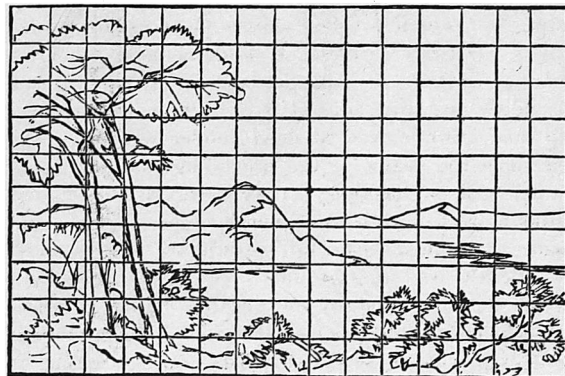


Fig. 3. MODEL FOR SCENE.

rule all the lines from that point with a ruler, but how can we do this on a big canvas?" By very much easier means than you suppose. First strike your horizontal line with a string that has been rubbed with charcoal. Now fasten a bent pin to a long piece of string like a very primitive fishing-line; hook the pin into the canvas at the point of sight, and the line can then be carried to any part of the canvas required. In actually painting lines you will require a straight-edge, which almost describes itself. It is merely a flat lath, bevelled on one side like a ruler; it should be five or six feet long, and can conveniently

be marked with feet and inches so as to serve a double purpose. A large pot of water, another of working size, and several long-haired brushes will complete your equipment. It must be understood that the size is for the purpose of binding the particles of color together. If a scene were painted without it the colors would rub off with the least touch. But this working size must be much more dilute than that used for priming: say one pint of the latter to three of water.

We will suppose that our first attempt is to be a landscape, for which we have made a colored design on paper to an inch scale. That is to say, supposing the canvas measures 15 feet by 10, our paper picture is 15 inches by 10. Mark the inches on the margin of the paper all round the design, and then draw pencil lines from point to point until the picture is covered with inch squares (see Fig. 3). Now mark the margin of the canvas all round in the same way, only with squares measuring one foot instead of one inch. This can easily be done by the string and charcoal arrangement already alluded to. The string must be held tight at each end, and plucked so that it rebounds on the canvas with a snap, a black charcoal line being left on the whitened canvas. By means of these squares we can, without much difficulty, sketch in our design with a piece of soft drawing charcoal, each square on the canvas containing a larger edition of the particular part of the subject contained within the corresponding square on the paper.

When this is done, the lines of the sketch should be gone over and rectified where necessary with a small brush charged with rose pink and working size. The sketch being satisfactorily accomplished, the canvas can be flogged with a clean cloth, in order that every trace of the charcoal squares may be removed. The colors are now laid on with due regard to light and shade. They will nearly all require to be tempered with whiting, which should be kept in a moist state ready for the purpose, otherwise they would be far too dark for many of the effects aimed at. It must be noted that in scene—or, as it is called, distemper—painting, the colors are far darker when wet than when dry.

Among the Dealers.

There is a wonderfully fine exhibit of Haviland faience at Davis Collamore & Co.'s store. The most conspicuous pieces are two unusually large vases, the ornamentation of which, by E. Lindeneher, is executed in a masterly manner. In each case the decoration consists of a grape-vine, whose luscious purple fruit, delicate trellis, and broad leaves—all exquisitely modelled—lie quite naturally against the rich dark green glaze of the vessels. The glaze in every part is smooth and regular, and so agreeable to the touch that a blind man could take pleasure in feeling it. We failed to find a single fire-crack in either piece, which is remarkable considering the intricacy and delicacy of the modelling.

Another Haviland vase, of still larger proportions and of no less beauty, stands between these two. The glaze of the body of the vessel is a warm gray, shaded to black, and the decoration is a graceful vine of trailing convolvulus.

Not content with possessing these colossal pieces of Haviland, Messrs. Davis Collamore and Co. have imported some plaques of Deck ware of no less gigantic proportions. Two of these pieces contain such a wealth of color as would make them almost invaluable for decorative purposes. One is a green and yellow parrot—against a violet background, if our memory serves us—and the other is a cock in green, blue, red, and silver bronzes.

From the potteries of Bourg la Reine are some admirable specimens, including a flat vase, on which is a painting of sheep, the foremost of which is remarkable for the clever foreshortening of the body.

The porcelain exhibit of Messrs. Collamore & Co. is not unworthy of such faience as we have described. It includes some excellent bird-painting by Ernie.

The curious tinted terra-cotta pictures in the show-windows of Alexander M. Hays & Co. daily draw a crowd of amused pedestrians. They are all original and new from Paris. One by Graillon, representing five children packed in an open basket, is very funny. The little wretches are all struggling and fighting in the most natural way. Another group by Graillon—this Frenchman is certainly a genius—represents a number of children crowding at a window blowing bubbles. One little fellow is crying because he has broken his pipe, and it is almost impossible to look at his face without laughing. A laborer lying asleep on the grass is an admirable composition. Polydore Comein has some equally good work in this way. His "L'Été," which represents a little girl in a single loosely-hanging garment fanning herself, is charmingly modelled. One would hardly believe it possible to represent in clay drapery so light and so natural-looking as that which the artist has given us in this picture.